# NEW DESCRIPTIONS

## *CYRTODACTYLUS ARAVALLENSIS*, A NEW GEKKONIDAE FROM THE DELHI RIDGE[1]

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(*With one plate*)

A new species of gecko *Cyrtodactylus aravallensis* is described from the Northern Aravalli Hills. The highlight of this discovery is that its closest relatives are found east of the Indus Basin.

While studying the lizards of the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University, I caught a gecko of a species which could not be identified after Smith (1935). This new species belongs to a group of small, palaeartic *Cyrtodactylus* species referred to by some authors as *Cyrtopodion* (Leviton *et al.* 1992).

The description of the type, an adult male, is given below.

**Cyrtodactylus aravallensis** sp. nov.

**Description**: Snout slightly longer than the distance between the eye and the ear opening, the greatest diameter of which is half, or less than a half that of the eye; pupil vertical; 9 or 10 upper and 6 to 8 lower labials. Head covered above with irregular rounded scales, mixed with larger ones posteriorly.

Back covered with large subtrihedal tubercles forming 9 or 10 straight series, and separated from one another by one or two small scales. An indistinct lateral fold when dead. 26 or 27 rounded scales across the middle of the belly.

Limbs with keeled, imbricate scales above, the hind limbs being covered posteriorly with large spiny-looking subtrihedal tubercles; toes elongate; subdigital lamellae well developed, those on the basal phalanges as broad as the digits.

Tail longer than the head and body, slightly depressed, with small scales and rows of large, spiny-looking subtrihedal tubercles above; with a median series of enlarged plates below.

The specimen described has the lower half of the tail regenerated, this part being covered with uniform smooth small scales.

Male with a continuous series of 38 preano-femoral pores.

**Colour** (*in vivo*): Sandy coloured above with darker spots, forming 7 irregular cross-bands on the back, and more on the tail; white spots along the sides of the head, the body and the tail; skin above the eyes slightly transparent; bronze eyes; whitish below.

This gecko has a limited capacity to change colour according to the light and the background, although it is not as developed as in *Hemidactylus flaviridis*.

**Length**: From snout to vent 51 mm; tail 68 mm.

**Etymology**: The name *Cyrtodactylus aravallensis* is given to this species after its place of discovery, which is a part of the northern extension of the Aravalli Hills.

**Holotype and paratype**: The type specimen was caught on the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University, on 1st September, 1995. It has been deposited with the BNHS (Regn. No. 1433, Lizard Collection).

Another adult male from the same location was similar, except for having only 21 ventral scales, 35 preano-femoral pores and two more series of large subtrihedal tubercles on the back.

**Relationship and diagnosis**: Referring to Smith (1935), we can say that this species, belonging to the *Cyrtodactylus scaber* group which is superficially distinguished from other *Cyrtodactylus* species by the straight series of large subtrihedal tubercles on the back, is closely allied to *Cyrtodactylus fedtschenkoi* and *Cyrtodactylus montium-salsorum* with which it shares the presence

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1. Lateral view of the type specimen (dead).
2. Free wild specimen in natural habitat, showing cryptic coloration.

of a continuous series of preano-femoral pores in the males.

It can, however, be distinguished from them by the presence of only 6 to 8 lower and 9 or 10 upper labials, versus 11 or 12 lower and 12 or 13 upper labials in these two species. Combined with the number of ventral scales: 21 to 27, versus 28 to 36 in *Cyrtodactylus fedtschenkoi* and 18 to 20 in *Cyrtodactylus montium-salsorum,* this character is diagnostic of the species.

While *Cyrtodactylus montium-salsorum* and *Cyrtodactylus fedtschenkoi* are known from the Punjab Salt Range, Baluchistan and further West respectively, the discovery of this species in the far away Aravalli Hills, east of the Indus basin is interesting.

**Ecology**: *Cyrtodactylus aravallensis* was discovered on a 265 m high, 600 m long rocky ridge surrounded by open, partly degraded tropical thorn forest. There, it shares the rocks with *Hemidactylus flaviridis, Hemidactylus brooki, Mabuya carinata* and *Calotes versicolor.*

It is a rather common lizard, coming out between sunset and dusk and moving with great speed. It behaves aggressively when caught, biting at any object within reach and depositing a white secretion, but temperament may vary with the individual. Both specimens had regenerated tails.

Further investigation and collection is needed to prove the validity of the species and to delimit its range.

## References


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